

PEOPLE COMMITTEE

(Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Authority)

18 October 2024

Present:

Councillors Clayton (Chair), Atkinson, Coles, Peart and Kerley (vice Kendall)

In attendance (Via Teams):

Councillor Carter

Apologies:

Councillors Trail BEM

* **PC/24/3**

Minutes

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held 26 July 2024 be signed as a correct record.

* **PC/24/4**

Performance Monitoring Report 2024-25: Quarter 2

The Committee received for information a report of the Assistant Director of Corporate Services (PC/24/9) detailing performance as at Quarter 2 of 2024-25 against those Key Performance Indicators (KPI) agreed by the Committee for measuring progress against the following three strategic priorities as approved by the Authority:

- 3(a). Ensure that the workforce is highly trained and has the capability and capacity to deliver services professionally, safely and effectively;
- 3(b). Increase the diversity of the workforce to better reflect the communities we serve, promoting inclusion and developing strong and effective leaders who ensure that we have a fair place to work where our organisational values are a lived experience; and
- 3(c). Recognise and maximise the value of all employees, particularly the commitment of on-call firefighters, improving recruitment and retention.

In particular, the report provided information on performance against each of the following key measures:

- Health and Safety; Reporting of Injuries; Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (RIDDOR); Accidents; Near Miss reports; Personal Injuries; Vehicle Incidents.
- Operational Core Competence Skills (breathing apparatus; incident command; water rescue; safety when working at heights or in confined spaces (SHACS); maritime; driving casualty care; fitness).

- Sickness and Absence; Health and Wellbeing.
- Fitness testing.
- Diversity and Inclusion.
- Strategic workforce planning including details of staff turnover.
- Employee engagement (also reported elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting at item PC/24/5).
- An overview of the People Services Systems project.
- Launch of the New People Strategy.

During consideration of the report, and specifically health and safety related issues, it was noted that near miss reporting had decreased since the previous quarter in 2024-25 when compared to the same quarter in 2023-24. The Service aimed to continue improving near miss reporting and, following a review of this area, to establish a Key Performance Indicator (KPI). It was suggested that a way forward could be to monitor the percentage increase in near miss reporting per quarter. Representative Bodies, and other Fire & Rescue Services had been consulted in identifying this as a suitable measure.

The Committee agreed that it was appropriate to have a measurable KPI in place, whereupon:

Councillor Coles **MOVED** (seconded by Councillor Peart):

“The Key Performance Indicator (KPI) to monitor the percentage increase in near miss reporting be set at 10% per quarter”.

Upon a vote, the motion was **CARRIED** unanimously.

The Committee was advised that the Service was anticipating an increase in Personal Injury reporting as this now captured an increased range of types of injury.

The Committee further noted the following key points:

- Working at Height and in Confined Spaces (SHACS) was showing as “Red” due to changes in the reporting systems. Until the Service transitioned across to the new consistent reporting approach, the measure was likely to remain “Red”, but an assurance was given that the Service was compliant with the older reporting standards and that the transition to the new standards was anticipated to be complete within the next 12 months. Maritime Level 2 competency was at “Amber” due to the associated issues with the Hot Villa at the Academy impacting the Service’s ability to deliver the training. It was anticipated that these issues would be resolved within the next quarter.
- There was a correction to the data in table under Fitness Testing on page 9 of the report circulated which should read “as of 20th September 2024, the number of staff passes totalled 1486”.

- A significant number of personal injuries reported were not occurring whilst staff were on duty but were related to incidents outside of the workplace. The Service was working to help staff look after themselves both in, and outside of, the workplace.
- The Service had identified that spikes in Mental Health cases (impacting staff absence) correlated with change programmes within the Service. The Service was revisiting how it communicates its change programmes, now and into the future, to support colleagues through the necessary changes to develop the Service.
- The Service's Occupational Health (OH) contract was due to end in 2026 and thoughts were turning towards defining what the Service expected from a future OH provider prior to a procurement process.
- An inclusive and accessible Firefighter recruitment programme was underway to meet needs identified through the Strategic Workforce Planning process. The Committee was apprised that diarised courses for On-call Firefighters to transfer to Whole Time Firefighters were at capacity. It was anticipated that the next external recruitment drive would also fulfil an at capacity intake.
- Wholetime staff attrition rates could be linked to historic recruitment drives with colleagues now reaching pensionable age and timing their departures with the instigation of the age discrimination pension remedies. Figures had been negatively impacted by the Service "holding" some vacancies whilst the Annualised Hours project was underway. In general, the Service was experiencing equal starters and leavers amongst its Wholetime Colleague cohort with most staff completing many years of service.

RESOLVED

- (a). That the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) to monitor the percentage increase in near miss reporting be set at 10% per quarter; and
- (b). Subject to (a) above, the report be noted.

* **PC/24/5**

People Survey Actions

The Committee received for information a report of the Assistant Chief Fire Officer, (Service Delivery), (PC/24/10) which provided an overview of the action being taken by the Service in response to this year's People Survey.

The Committee was apprised that the percentage of all respondents who would recommend the Service had increased since 2023, however, the figure remained lower than that of other fire and rescue services analysed by People Insight. Unpicking that data further, it had been identified that there had been a reduction in the percentage of wholetime and on-call firefighters who would recommend the Service. This was partly attributed to the effects of the ongoing change programme being felt within the service (Minute PC/24/4 also refers). Five areas of focus had been identified from the 2023 survey, the following key points from which were:

- Inclusion of thought: there had been no significant change in the responses;
- Bullying and harassment: fewer colleagues were witnessing or experiencing bullying and harassment in their workplace;
- Trust in leadership: there had been a year-on-year decrease in respondents reporting that they trusted the Leadership Team to make decisions that supported them;
- Support staff: there was an increase in staff who would recommend the Service; and
- Working well together: there had been minimal change against this focus area.

The Committee expressed concern at the drop in trust in leadership from 43% in the previous survey to 33% in 2024. The Service concurred that this was disappointing and recognised that its programme of change had likely impacted this result, along with changes to the Executive Board and Leadership Team. Now that the Service is expected to enter a period of stability at Executive Board level, it was anticipated the results would be improved over future years. It would be key to be clear and direct in communicating the rationale behind future planned changes. The Service had identified an action plan to address these results as identified within paragraph 10.6 of the report.

* **PC/24/6**

His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Services: Action Plan Update

The Committee received for information a report of the Chief Fire Officer (PC/24/11) outlining progress to date against the Action Plans developed to address both His Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary & Fire & Rescue Service's (HMICFRS) Areas for Improvement (from the 2021/22 inspection report) and the subsequent national recommendations.

The Committee was advised that the HMICFRS' cause for concern and resulting action plan had been completed and this work had transitioned into the Service as business as usual.

Two of the eight identified areas for improvement (from the HMICFRS Inspection), delegated to this Committee, had been closed. Of the remaining six, three were currently marked as "In progress – Off track" as the Recruitment Policy had been dependent on the People Strategy, current recruitment controls, and the Safeguarding strategy (due to Disclosure & Barring Service (DBS) and Safer Recruitment). It was anticipated that the People Strategy would be out for consultation by 31/10/24 with a further update anticipated, from the People Services Team, to the next People Committee Meeting.

Of the Values and Culture HMICFRS recommendations, four remained open "On track"

The Standards of Behaviour recommendations were at varying stages of progress/completion since these had only recently been received and the Service was currently considering actions to address them.

The Committee noted that where action deadlines had been extended this had been to ensure they were realistic and achievable for the Service. The Service was now confident in achieving these actions as detailed in the report

***DENOTES DELEGATED MATTER WITH POWER TO ACT**

The Meeting started at 10.00 am and finished at 11.52 am

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